

Dr. William Brown House
212 S. Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia

HABS No. VA-466 HABS

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7-ALEX,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington 25, D.C.

Dr. William Brown House
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Present Owner: Mrs. Howard R. Tolley

Present Occupant and Use: Residence of owner

Description

Frame with brick ell, central chimney, Regional style

Number of stories: 2 ½

Historical Data

Year of erection: Between 1757 & 1783. Local tradition places construction prior to the Revolution.

Built for (first owner): Unknown. The lot has been purchased by Augustine Washington, brother of the General.

Builder: Acquired by Dr. Brown from John Mills

Notable events and occupants:

The modest home of Dr. Brown is architecturally and historically one of the most interesting in Alexandria. This building is clapboarded, reported to be over brick, but whether the description refers to noggin, is not clear. In any case the brick foundation, like that of the Fendell House is entirely covered with wood. The small entrance porch probably dates from the early 19th century.

Inside, at the back of the spacious hall, there is a window to borrow light, opening into the back drawing room. The chimney end of the front room upstairs is very elaborate with matching arched cupboards, fluted pilasters and denticulated cornice. The mantel shelf is unusual and distinctive, employing a large central urn with console, and a pair of crossset panels which repeat the overmantel treatment.

In the brick ell is the kitchen with open fireplace and Dutch oven. There is also a hand-hewn stone sink and copper vat with its own firebox. In the garden stands a tall brick smokehouse.

Dr. William Brown was a nephew of Dr. Gustavus Brown who attended Washington during his last illness. Dr. William Brown was appointed by General Washington, Physician-General and Director of Hospitals for the Continental Army. He wrote and published the first American Pharmacopoeia in 1778. Washington's accounts show that he lived for a few years in the General's Town House, the sum owed for rent being cancelled due to advances made by the Doctor for professional service.

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References: Gay Montague Moore, Seaport in Virginia..., Richmond, 1945,
Chap. 8. HABI form, prepared by T. Rusaell Jones and
Worth Bailey, HABS National Park Service, Dec. 1958.

Approved

Dick Sutton

Date

Feb. 16, 1959

Chief Architect

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